

Technical and Vocational Education and Training:
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 20

Hans-Uwe Otto *Editor*

Facing Trajectories from School to Work

Towards a Capability-Friendly Youth
Policy in Europe

 Springer

Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects

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Hans-Uwe Otto
Editor

Facing Trajectories from School to Work

Towards a Capability-Friendly Youth
Policy in Europe

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Lavinia Bifulco • Jean-Michel Bonvin
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Björn Halleröd • Christian Christrup Kjeldsen
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Foreword

Fighting Social Inequality for Vulnerable Youth: A European Case

At least the last 30 years have seen a steady growth in the number of unemployed people in European countries. The so-called great recession of 2007–2008, however, has witnessed not only one more increase in unemployment, but one of a radical nature. It is a sign of the resulting catastrophic situation that the number of unemployed youths in many EU-countries is greater than that of unemployed people generally. This is where the scandal begins as the hopelessness of integrating the youth into the labour market has so far become increasingly entrenched, together with dangerous consequences for their entire life perspective.

The group of unemployed youth has increased regardless if they have received a professional or a vocational education are drawn into a vortex of structural exclusion from all chances to get job opportunities. Especially those youths in particular find themselves in a dramatic situation who are disadvantaged because of their socialisation, their inadequate school achievements or their status of early school leavers. During the extraordinarily important transition phase to an adult role, and at a time when they are adjusting to the necessary orientation to the labour market, they are excluded through the conventional structure of opportunities from the dominant system of norms and rigidly regulated access possibilities. This group of youths is at the centre of the European empirically-based joint project “Making Capabilities Work” (WorkAble). This project has concerned itself with the research, analysis and dissemination of fundamental changes in the framework of the theory of justice, and has applied its findings to the consequences for youth – and social policy on the transition from school to work.

The multiple problems caused by youth unemployment and its consequences are of course not new, but, far from going down, the number of disadvantaged youths has increased exponentially in the present crisis situation in Europe. Many organisational solutions of transition systems in the respective countries, though no doubt well-intentioned and largely responding to traditional job descriptions, have

not been greatly successful in their offers of old, standardised approaches to the world of work. It is because of these reasons that participant youths tend to regard these efforts with resignation rather than deriving extra motivation from them, not least because these measures mostly do not impart skills or achievements that would count either towards a regular job or further education courses. And even if such chances arise, they are to be found in an increasingly deregulated labour market in the EU, i.e. the 15–25-year olds are offered either insecure part-time jobs or instruction courses, or temporary jobs.

Once again, these vulnerable youths, in times of a weak economy, are the first to be parked in areas of exclusion, or rather shunted to them. In this way, unemployment is constantly associated even by these young people with the societal stigma of self-blame.

However, also flexibility to adapt as a demanding strategy of employers have for many years not been enough to develop sustainable chances for re-employment and the quality of live in the context of human development. What is necessary therefore is a radical spin of the ideological and factual lines of actions that dominate in the EU.

This volume was initiated in response to the way in which a high level of youth unemployment has become a permanent feature throughout Europe. Although descriptions of the problems involved have by now elicited an almost overwhelming mass of critical analyses, this has not led to any improvement for the youths concerned. Rather, all the different national training initiatives merge into a comprehensive lack of any prospect for the group of vulnerable youth. In this problem area, “Making Capabilities Work” is the first empirical project to pursue a justice theory perspective on the European level, thus contributing to a fundamental change in the currently mostly insufficient attempts within the human capital approach towards using the labour market to ensure desired lifestyle forms and a secure income for young people. Therefore only a radical change in the usual organizational forms and the dominant policy concerning the vocational and educational training is necessary to give the young a real chance to live a life they have reason to value. The top priority of a new policy must be to level substantial inequalities of skills and living conditions to enforce their reproduction aiming the quality of equal opportunities in work and social life.

These issues must be addressed from a structural perspective. The labour market policies of today are focused on the supply side, emphasizing individual human capital. But should young people be expected to value jobs that are not valued by the rest of society?

In a clear alternative to existing research in this problem area, the application-oriented basic research of the WorkAble project will take the Capability Approach (CA) as a heuristic frame of reference for the analysis of the processes described. Beside its political-philosophical character, the CA provides a particularly appropriate basis for interdisciplinary research that clearly goes beyond earlier theoretical and empirical research approaches on well-being, educational and learning.

Essentially, the CA describes and explains in an overarching framework the conditions and possibilities of human development in the light of the individual person as well as an institutional support that human beings receive or do not receive. In the CA theory, the term *capability* means a person's potential to achieve certain functionings. Viewing social inequality as a form of capability deprivation makes it possible not only to conceive of interdisciplinary studies in interactional disadvantage as being embedded in a broader social context but also to develop counter measures on all relevant levels, means institutions, structures and individual characteristics.

In the "WorkAble" project, the CA has been used as an evaluative framework in which the application of indicators will follow central benchmarks, namely the capability for education, for work and for voice. The background to the CA is always formed by a justice-theoretical framework directed towards what is particularly important to the population under study: namely the fact that all persons have the freedom to exploit alternatives to those possibilities of reproduction that have either been assigned to them or that they have chosen for themselves.

By using the capability approach, the authors offer a unique combination of theoretical explanations, innovative research and empirical methods in evaluating practical models in the transition from school to work in different European countries.

"WorkAble" has therefore set itself the goal of performing a problem-oriented analysis of youth unemployment and acquiring the necessary knowledge for a broader clarification of what we need to know. These are on the one hand analyses of longitudinal EU-SILC and other data, in combination with in-depth analyses of specific countries and comparative analyses of pairs of countries. On the other hand, what also has been a desideratum were qualitative case studies in the following nine countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK (Scotland). The main research interest was to what extent the individual programmes opened up new chances and new spectrums to develop social justice, human flourishing and emancipation or whether they gave them only time for limited experience usually without any chance to reach a sufficient vocational education or offering any new perspective to maintain a decent life.

The findings of the research close an important gap in the overarching search for the development of consistent alternatives to the dominant practice. The research was carried out using the CA with the primary aim of furnishing new approaches towards more socially balanced vocational programmes, but also for comprehensive reforms in welfare-related contexts, which are needed to strengthen the structural prerequisite: human development beyond the human capital approach! It is only through this novel approach that young people are given the chance to exert real influence on their lives, which increases at the same time their energy potential as well as their motivation to engage as members of a civil society in more general matters of public concern.

In addition, the challenges and perspectives of capability-friendly policies are thrown into relief by this combination of aims, which adumbrates the dialectical

relationship between personal development and structural preconditions, and thus points out the new challenges to societal efforts to establish new kinds of youth, social and labour market policies.

Bielefeld, Germany

Hans-Uwe Otto

Series Editors Introduction

Hans-Uwe Otto (Ed.) **Facing trajectories from school to work – Towards a capability-friendly Youth Policy in Europe**, Springer: Dordrecht

Youth unemployment (and underemployment) is a serious problem in the vast majority of countries in Europe. It is an economic and social problem which has been steadily growing over the past 30 years, and which has enormous political ramifications.

Youth are defined by the United Nations as being between 15 and 24 years of age. An unemployed person is someone who does not have a job but is actively seeking work, is willing and able to work, and is of the officially designated ‘working age’. Youth unemployment rates are, historically, double or more the adult rates in nearly every country in the world.

This important book examines key aspects of youth unemployment and school to work transition with regard to social inequality and discusses what can be done productively, and in concrete terms, to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in Europe.

The book is the result of a European funded research project called “WORKABLE: making capabilities work”, undertaken between 2009 and 2012. That project explores the application of the ‘capabilities approach’ to policies for the support of disadvantaged young people in Europe and the possibility of their full participation in their societies and economies.

The capabilities approach is a concept developed in developmental economics that has until now been mainly applied to developing countries and the quality of life in such societies. The concept aims at an expansion of welfare economics from a mono-dimensional concentration on income maximisation to a wider, multidimensional concept of quality of life, which involves a range of indicators, such as income, education, and health. The concept of capabilities welfare economics addresses not only the maximisation of income but also the possibilities and chances of individuals to participate in social and economic life. Beyond the application in comparative developmental economics, the concept is also used for national reporting on welfare, poverty and the like.

This book makes an original contribution to this field in that it reports on results from the first project that sought to apply the capabilities approach to the topic of vocational education and training, and to labour market policies of the European Union and its member states. The authors apply the concept to different levels of the topics of youth policies, vocational education and labour market policies. In addition to examining capability perspectives concerning such important matters in Europe as changing welfare policies, institutionalized education, labour market and education, and programmes for disadvantaged young people in Europe, the volume provides nine insightful case studies of programmes for disadvantaged young people in Europe.

The book assists the reader to understand the important contribution of the capabilities approach to the analyses of youth and social policies. The volume will be of interest to students and researchers working on the topics of poverty, vocational education and training, and social policies, as well as emerging labour market policies; and will be of value in a range of courses that deal with the relationship between welfare economics, social policy and education, in education, sociology, social sciences, and economics.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Tai Po, Hong Kong
2 August 2014

Rupert Maclean

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Part I
Capability Perspectives on Vulnerable
Youth in Europe

Chapter 1

Towards a Capabilities Perspective on Vulnerable Young People in Europe: An Introduction

**Holger Ziegler, Thierry Berthet, Roland Atzmüller, Jean-Michel Bonvin,
and Christian Christrup Kjeldsen**

The volume at hand was developed out of the insights and results of an EU collaborative research project with the title “Making Capabilities Work”. Within this project, 13 partner institutions from different disciplines (educational science, sociology, economics, philosophy, political studies and social work), which are located in ten European countries, have collaborated in a multidimensional research process. This project was the first that applies the so-called capability approach to the topic of vocational education and training as well as labour market policies of the EU and its member states. Based on the insights of this project, the interdisciplinary chapters of this volume aim at assessing the policy strategies dealing with local

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youngsters' education, labour market demands and regional inequalities with respect to their potential of enabling young people to participate in working life and society.

The volume is designed for scientists and (advanced) students in the fields of social policy, education, youth studies, labour market analyses, economics and sociology but also for professional practitioners and policymakers who are interested in a cardinal issue in countries all over Europe: the issue of unemployed and socially vulnerable youth and what policies might contribute in order to improve their situation and to create a more socially balanced and just polity. As the volume demonstrates that this task requires the development of capability-friendly politics and that virtually all European countries could do more to develop (further) in that direction.

Theoretically this volume draws on ideas of the capability approach. This approach is applied to a broad number of practical topics of European policies. The volume demonstrates that this application may provide a more appropriate evaluative frame for assessing policies and politics and shows that this perspective makes a difference and provides value added in terms of promoting well-being on the level of individual persons – in particular for the worst off – but also in terms of enhancing justice on a social level.

Philosophically the capability approach represents one of the currently most influential and sophisticated attempts to reconcile the competing demands associated with the fundamental conceptions of equality, recognition and liberty and offers an alternative evaluative framework for assessing both the life perspectives of individuals and the social quality of policies and social arrangements, which moves the attention towards the issue of autonomy and “agency freedom” of young persons. Analytically this approach promises offering solutions to the problem of full and effective social participation while simultaneously adapted to the changing work conditions with their demand not only for competencies and skills but also flexibility and autonomy.

It focuses the issue of a good life, respectively, a successful conduct of life or in other words the extent of negative and positive freedoms and powers people have to achieve doings and beings that they have reasons to value. As the fundamental metric of this approach is the capability each person has to enjoy the valuable states of being and practices, the capability approach is concerned with the possibilities of cultivation and just distribution of the freedom and the well-being of persons and thus with the range and quality of the spectrum as well as the number of those opportunities and capacities of people to be able to realise doings and beings important to their own concept of a good life that can effectively be realised and differentiated. For this attempt, it is vital to distinguish merely formal possibilities from realisable ones. This, however, is not primarily a philosophical but a complicated empirical question in the field of scientific policy analysis.

As a philosophical approach, the capability approach does not primarily concern itself with what causes the present or absent capabilities in specific given situations and economic, social and institutional conditions. Related to this, the approach as an abstract, universalist approach does not deliver an analysis of the mechanisms,

institutional frames and social or policy contexts that support or limit the achievement of capabilities and may thus also neglect specific structures of power and inequality. Yet this is what this volume, as a social scientific analysis on the heuristic framework of the capability approach, aims to provide. Furthermore, the volume at hand tackles an “elephant in the room” within the capabilities literature. The philosophical debates around the capability approach are often remarkably silent about the issue of work. Yet it is simply obvious that work (including unpaid work) takes up much of the lives of people, counts to the important practices that people may or may not have reason to value and has – related to its quantity and quality – profound further effects in terms of enhancing or constraining the capabilities achievable to persons, may that be through its products or the very process of work. As Andrew Sayer (2012: 5)¹ points out: “Work is or can be more than merely a means by which we provision ourselves. While it is often treated negatively in economics as simply a cost or burden, it may, depending on its character, enable us to use and develop our senses, skills and powers, to relate to others and indeed be a good in itself rather than merely a means to other ends. In addition to the intrinsic qualities of the activity, be they good or bad, the kind of work we do also affects the recognition that we get from others. This may range from respect to contempt, and can in turn have significant effects on individuals’ self-respect and self-esteem”. This also outlines what a capabilities perspective on (youth) unemployment scrutinises. In doing so, the volume combines the results of three levels of analyses:

1. A comparative institutional mapping and analysis of vocational and labour market policies in a range of European countries
2. Case studies to reconstruct the conceptions, aspirations and practices of local actors implementing educational and training programmes
3. Quantitative secondary analyses of national and European longitudinal data revealing how effectively these strategies enhance economic performance and close the capability gap for young people

1.1 Central Considerations of the Volume

While strengthening economic competitiveness is currently the main aim of youth, labour market and social policy, it seems to be obvious that/not least the recent crisis showed that also the development of strategies for enhancing the social sustainability of Europe is still an unfinished task. The central argument of the contributions of this volume is that such strategies have to be able to deal with local labour market demands and regional inequalities and need to be focused on the capabilities of young people to actively shape their personal and work lives and to cope with economic, cultural, demographic and technological challenges. With respect to this

¹Sayer (2012): *Capabilities, contributive injustice and unequal divisions of labour*. In: Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, 13(4), pp. 580–596.

task, it seems to be clear that strategies which focus on individual knowledge, skills and competencies on the one hand or individual motivations and behaviours on the other hand must fail if the complex social, cultural and institutional factors are ignored which on the one hand affect personal features and on the other hand allow young people to convert such features into capabilities to function as fully participating active citizens and provide opportunities or restrictions for using such acquired powers.

The contributions in this volume indicate that the assumption that European societies are shaped by a diversity of economic conditions and political traditions resulting in different national and regional policies and practices, different welfare policy arrangements and different vocational and educational regimes is by and large still valid. However, they also demonstrate that beyond all these differences, in more or less all European societies, political and institutional strategies have to cope with the challenge of considerable rates of youth unemployment, early school leaving and dropouts from upper secondary education. With respect to unemployment rates, there is no doubt that all over Europe the proportion of unemployed young persons is generally higher than the overall rate of unemployment. In this respect, the different countries vary. In Germany, for instance, the proportion of unemployed young persons in relation to general unemployment is 1.5:1, whereas in other countries such as Sweden or Italy it is more than 3:1. Yet these numbers depend on the question what is counted as “unemployment”, as in some countries – as, for instance, in Germany – unemployed young persons who are “parked” in labour market policy measures which are conceptualised as “educational” typically do not count as “unemployed”. Furthermore, the mere (un)employment rates do not give much information about the quality, the stability and the durability of the jobs. There is some evidence that, with respect to the prospect to get a kind of education and employment which they have reason to value, in particular the young adults often exhibit multiple strains and remain stuck longer in a transitional state between insecure employment conditions, short-term educational and employment support projects and educational and social welfare support systems.

Currently, most strategies of youth, education, labour market and social policy in European societies at least rhetorically (respectively, in terms of legitimacy claims) emphasise the necessity to promote skills and competencies of young people that are seen as conducive to improving the economic productivity and competitiveness of the given countries of Europe as a whole. Yet there is empirical doubt that the actual policies for those young people that failed in the standard educational path are really geared towards promoting skills and competencies. At least in some strategies, the focus on “skills and competencies” seems to be more or less tantamount with disciplinary strategies to enhance the allegedly low willingness of marginalised young persons to work under increasingly precarious conditions.

Yet beyond the question, the promotion of skills and competencies is seen as actually a task and not only as legitimacy claim, and beyond the question how successful the strategies of the different countries actually are with respect to *this* task, it is debatable whether the task itself is appropriately formulated. Even if Europe would succeed with respect to such economic performance indicators,

the problem is still that such a metric of economic returns of investments in young persons does hardly grasp the extent of young people's capabilities to act as fully participating active citizens in not only economically but also democratically well-performing societies.

Thus, European societies seem to be confronted with the unfulfilled task to develop transversal strategies integrating central economic, educational and social issues in order to close the capability gap in the young and particularly the inadequacies between education and training and the requisites of modern societies to which they, and, above all, the more disadvantaged, are exposed.

The volume at hand argues that deprivation in terms of education and technical and nontechnical knowledge and skills is not just a burden to economic productivity, growth and competitiveness and the social cohesion of European member states. Rather it focuses on the fact that it also diminishes individual well-being and future prospects for the young people concerned in terms of labour market chances, financial security, democratic participation and opportunities for self-realisation.

The starting point of the analyses within this volume is the observation that a considerable number of young people are exposed to social disqualification and even disaffiliation in social life. From this observation, a main objective is clearly to derive: What policies are needed in order to extend young people's capabilities to function as fully participating citizens in modern European societies? The volume argues that to give an answer to this question is not only central for the young people themselves but also for a future Europe endangered by the exclusion of young people from education and labour market, as well as their non-participation in political and community life.

This perspective broadens a current perspective which is not necessarily wrong, but as the contributions in this volume suggest too narrow and too one-sided. It is hardly to deny that in policies all over Europe, educational strategies in the form of investments in human capital are increasingly regarded as the primary means to tackle the challenges of demographic and technological change but also the risk of social disruption. At first glance, there might be a reason to suggest that these strategies are rational and appropriate. There is little doubt that levels of education can still be raised significantly across the EU and that the levels of education are – at least statistically – associated with the employment rate, the degree of unemployment and the quality of labour. A range of prospective studies indicate that, particularly due to technological change, labour demand will increase relative to supply for more highly educated people while there will simultaneously be “a considerable replacement demand for less skilled people, especially in EU-15 countries” (European Commission 2007: 59). Thus, investments in human capital that enhance the development of knowledge, dispositions, skills and competencies – and therefore the quality of the labour force – might well be perceived as investments in an area with relatively high social and economic returns. This is particularly the case when a match between the supply of skills and labour market demand is ensured. This common wisdom seems to be generally valid, and there is not much doubt that investments in education and training before, during and after unemployment generally increase re-employment chances and reduce scarring effects. However, the overall requirements

of this match do vary between European countries. Thus, the relation of investments in educational and vocational training and social and economic returns is not always and everywhere the same and it is not always strictly linear, and strategies which seem to be effective in “bringing young people into jobs” were not necessarily helpful with respect to the job quality and stability once they were (re-)employed, let alone with respect to their broader well-being.

Nevertheless, the Lisbon strategy of the EU underlines that pursuing the goal of making the European Union, respectively, the members of the union a competitive, wealthy and dynamic knowledge-based economy entails the demand for a strategy for European multilevel governance in order to create realms of possibility for the ongoing development of skills through education and training. Actually, a broad range of human capital and employability-oriented approaches to education have been developed. These strategies emphasise tailor-made active labour market policies which promise investments in the potentials of individuals in order to promote labour and social integration within society.

At least rhetorically promoting the task of increasing employment opportunities by ensuring that (young) people acquire and maintain “marketable” skills, knowledge and competencies seems to be the overarching task in all the countries considered. Yet the strategies of ensuring employability – but also of mediating the relation between unemployment deprivation and vulnerability – vary significantly. Broadly speaking, three general strategies might be identified:

1. *Initiative employability.* This is a strategy which insists on developing individual employability and individual responsibility for this (i.e. the state ought to retreat in order to oblige individuals to take up their responsibilities). The matching between supply- and demand-side policies is mainly conceived in terms of individual adaptability. These strategies often go alongside with the development of fixed quantitative targets and policy evaluation instruments in order to monitor not only the benefit recipients’ behaviours but also the officers’ practices within local service agencies.
2. *Interactive or embedded employability.* These are strategies which stress the joint responsibility of the state and companies to develop individual’s employability. These strategies differ from the latter in particular in terms of the realm of negotiating with respect to the content of employability policies and in terms of the degree to which of a two-way adaptability is demanded, whereby the two-way adaptability indicates that it is not only the responsibility of individuals to be equipped for labour markets, but also the task of labour markets to be equipped for individuals.
3. *Flexicurity strategies.* Flexicurity strategies are strategies which combine flexible contractual arrangements, (lifelong) training strategies, active labour market policies and modernised social security mechanisms. These strategies highlight the negotiation between the social partners as a key ingredient in the design and implementation of policies.

While all of these institutional strategies are focusing on the development of individual potential and trying to combine supply-side and demand-side policies,

they vary in terms of the aspects of employment they are focusing on. Furthermore, these strategies vary in terms of their responsiveness with respect to the fact that increases in average skill requirements, coupled with the risk of skill polarisation, imply the need of a reform of educational processes and outputs in terms of a shift from specialised skills towards broader, more analytical generic skills. In this respect, strategies which stress the need of two-way adaptability seem to be more appropriate than programmes which are only focusing on short-term individual adaptability to current labour market demands. Eventually these strategies also vary with respect to their implications on labour market regulation, the way education and training and other compensatory programmes for unemployed youth are organised and finally even in their concepts of the “disadvantages” they are intended to tackle.

Yet the task of this volume is not only to classify and evaluate different given strategies but also to elaborate strategies which go beyond employability perspectives, i.e. to develop and justify an evaluative metric which balances demands from employment systems and lifeworlds beyond the economy and takes into account the options of young persons to make choices about the life path they have reason to value.

A central aspect of the theoretical considerations of the contributions at hand is that the tendency to reduce educational processes to investment in human capital runs the manifest risk to ignore or even to positively undermine the notion of education in terms of practical reasoning and reflexive judgement concerning the creation of one’s own life project but also those abilities and competencies that are undismissible to reproduce the social conditions of capitalist market economies. These effects of the market appear as problems of individuals and in particular of young people to have a stable life course. Thus, a central conclusion is the argument that – at least in the long run – only when people have the ability to choose the life they have reason to value, the economy may have the prospect to be reproduced in a socially sustainable way. This basically means that through the capability approach the problem to socially (re-)embed an (increasingly globalised capitalist) economy to secure its social sustainability can be posed from a different angle. This approach allows to start from the perspective of what individuals can actually do and achieve and then asks which social (i.e. resources and conversion factors) as well as individual (capabilities) conditions are needed for these freedoms to be realised.

To envisage and acknowledge the fundamental place of work in human life and to acknowledge the relevance of education in terms of training and expertise are therefore not the same as to reduce and to streamline education into human capital production, and it is obviously not the same as to impose “employability” as an indisputable objective.

This points to a number of theoretically considerable and practically significant differences between hereto dominating employability strategies and a capability perspective which is elaborated in the volume at hand. An outline of these differences might be summarised as such: *Competence-oriented employability* is centred on individuals and consists in a combination of knowledge, know-how, experiences and attitudes implemented in a given context. Therefore, evaluating the employability,

respectively, the (ability to) work in given job options is by and large equated with an evaluation of the person. Yet the theoretical and empirical contributions of this volume provide evidence that the development and realisation of such competencies require knowledge, will, the power to act (agency) and recognition. These are not only individual features. In particular the agency and the recognition of competencies largely depend on the institutional contexts and the opportunities provided in these contexts. Thus, equation of employability with the individual features of the person might foster the tendency to weaken collective frameworks and supports, to inappropriately responsabilise eventually those unable to fulfil their personal task and update their competencies in accordance to the demands of the labour market.

A *capabilities perspective*, in contrast, denotes a person's potential, that is, in this connection, the capacity for work and achievement, the scope of possibilities a person can effectively achieve. This concept thus aims at effective freedom in life and work, that is, freedom on the labour market, at work and in the design, implementation and assessment of educational and training interventions themselves. The expansion of public investments to enhance capabilities is conceptualised as a collective responsibility aiming at, for example, establishing collective guarantees ensuring the transferability of expertise acquired by young people.

On the fundament of the capability approach, this volume provides evidence on the significance of educational and other strategies to support people who fail to travel the standard routes of education and transition to employment, not only in terms of investments in human capital or instruments for enhancing employability but in a broader sense of enabling individuals to develop a range of capabilities that allow them to lead the life they have reason to value. These capabilities are about choice in terms of valuable options and not only about having useful and marketable capacities and skills.

There is an inherent, yet tense, relationship between the concept of capabilities and the very notion of education. On the one hand, there is reason to argue that every educational process somehow supports capability formation. The contributions of this volume identify a number of strategies which do so only implicitly. Thereby, they demonstrate that an advantage of the capabilities perspective is to provide analytical tools to grasp this influence and to support the aim of making this a rational strategy for individuals and political actors. On the other hand, there are some strategies which seem to aim at creating something like "capabilities" on a surface level. Yet sometimes, the legitimatory claim of creating capabilities seems eventually to dovetail well with a kind of secret curriculum, which may, for instance, be reconstructed with respect to the function of the dual system to integrate young workers into a hierarchical order with strong gendered notions etc.

It is important to note that the question what education and which educational strategies contribute to creating capabilities is a complex and multidimensional empirical issue rather than an issue of sound proclamations and legitimatory claims.

Nevertheless, this volume emphasises the insight that education may play a critical role in the conversion of potential resources and opportunities into real and effective capacities that possess a practical relevance for conducting a life characterised by meaningful work but also by autonomy and voice. Yet this role of education

presupposes that it is not instrumentally narrowed into an activation tool for work-first strategies. The concept of “conversion factors”, i.e. the features, structures and processes, which allow a person to transform resources or services into the achievement of beings and doings he or she has reason to value is of significant relevance. The volume at hand focuses on the complex interplay between personal and social or institutional conversion factors. These conversion factors might be analytically disentangled and differentiated, practically; however, they seem to be highly related. Personal conversion factors indicate internal enabling skills as well as faculties, abilities, aspirations and attitudes (all of which are not only individual features but features which might be acquired through educational processes). With respect to the issue of such personal conversion factors, it is worthwhile to mention that the contributions in this volume draw on evidence from genuine local research suggesting that the ability of a young person to develop and express his or her preferences is not a generally given individual feature but largely structured by education and institutionally arranged opportunity sets. This is one aspect of what we call *opportunity for voice*.

Social and institutional conversion factors might be considered as socially structured sets of a person’s attainable opportunities and life paths. On a socio-structural level, social norms, gender roles, power relations, discriminatory practices etc. function as such conversion factors. On the level of institutional practices, entitlements, welfare and educational arrangements, collective provisions but also the rationalities of collective decision-making processes turned out to function as important conversion factors. Particularly interesting might be the fact that institutional classifications of persons into categories turned out to be an important part of institutional conversion factors which may generate inequalities and constraints in the access to the means and freedoms of full social participation. Public organisations and programmes tend to enable or constrain particular life courses and ways of conducting one’s life by implying more or less restrictive views of what is a valuable being or doing. Therefore, management reforms such as, for instance, towards more standardised managerial forms of service provision are not only a side issue but indeed a significant aspect of enhancing or diminishing the capabilities of the beneficiaries of social or educational services.

In order to grasp the potentials of educational strategies, this volume elaborates a research focus which argues that the number of people integrated into the labour market (with a certain quality of work) is an important, but not the only, criterion to assess the effectiveness of educational, social and labour market policy. On this fundament, it investigates which capabilities are important for young people in order to not only adapt to currently prevalent conditions but also actively steer their own future development and in order to enhance the complex range and quality of what young people are effectively able to do and to be. These capabilities turn out to be tantamount to key competencies permitting continuous flexibility in skills acquisition and enabling young people to cope with discontinuities in their private and working biographies, the uncertainties of social and economic conditions.

The contributions in this volume imply that a broadening of the informational basis is a prerequisite for appropriately assessing the policies in different educational and

labour market regimes. This necessity is clearly recognisable in particular when young person's own perspectives and his or her own choice of pathways were taken into account. Therefore, this volume suggests a concept which entails a combination of the key labour market functionings of employability, participation, well-being and agency. The central performance indicator is the expansion of the capabilities of young persons, enabling them to live in and shape a democratic society by functioning as fully participating citizens. These capabilities are conceptualised in terms of a young person's potential or substantive freedom to achieve alternative combinations of states or activities he or she has reason to value.

In order to underline the significance of both personal and contextual conditions for the construction and exploitation of capabilities, we distinguish analytically between *internal capabilities* involving skills, knowledge, attitudes, sense of initiative, self-efficacy, creativity etc. located in person-related characteristics and *external capabilities* relating to economically, culturally and institutionally structured sets of attainable life paths that make it necessary to analyse whether and how gender, class position, ethnic background or spatial segregation impede the development of young people's opportunities and abilities to achieve full participation.

In essence, the evaluative metric elaborated in this volume grasps the essential fulcrum between opportunities, institutional structures, personal and external resources and human achievements. This analytically complex frame is necessary in order to assess more carefully the possibilities that are open to young persons, the amount and quality of effective freedoms they possess as well the obstacles that impede their life perspectives and most of all the possible public actions available to enhance their possibilities and to diminish the inequalities in their capabilities.

The volume highlights the relevance of the differences of opportunities which are experienced as *real* and not merely as hypothetical and formal. This difference is particularly critical when opportunities are perceived as largely formal, but the task and responsibility to make use of these "opportunities" is attributed to the young persons themselves. It is not only the opportunity set of a society which is largely structured by general economic conditions but also the local practices of public policies and the meaning-making or signifying practices of services sector institutions, which ensure or impede opportunities for young persons to fully participate and especially to succeed to convert them into capabilities in the sense of "real" opportunities.

Given the often vulnerable life situations of young persons, it seems to be fair to suggest that education and training for the labour market is one of the most significant contexts of providing and mediating prospects of positive development in current European societies. As this context is a major determinant of not only individual life chances but also the preconditions for participating in collective decisions, it is most vital to look at education from a holistic perspective. The capability approach seems to be appropriate to provide an analytical fundament to develop such a perspective.

In particular, three interrelated dimensions of capabilities are of central architectonic relevance for the life prospects of vulnerable young persons. These capabilities

point to the freedoms of young persons to navigate the complex interplay between education, work and community and might be described as:

- (a) Being able to work, i.e. to choose a self-valued professional life and securely access the labour market
- (b) Being able to be educated and to choose a self-valued educational career
- (c) Being able to participate in economic, political and social life

Intentionally or not, all local policies in the countries analysed in this volume directly or indirectly affect the capabilities sets of young persons with respect to these dimensions and enable or hinder young persons to convert institutional, educational and vocational resources into capabilities, allowing them to function as active and fully participating citizens who are able to take autonomous decisions and to participate in the constitution of the new situations they have to face in the transition to adulthood.

In summary the volume highlights the need to appropriately analyse the process of developing young people's skills as a process of capability building, which includes the need of recognising the complex relations between formally institutionalised strategies of vocational education and training (VET). It demonstrates that it is reasonable and appropriate to focus on the institutionally mediated complexity of different *conversion factors* rather than on the youth characteristics in themselves and on the resources or goods they obtain from the labour market and institutions, i.e. the significance of resources and services derives not only from the individual but also from the socially and institutionally embedded capability of young persons to convert them into valued states and actions.

Following this consideration, the volume aims at analysing the real possibilities which are open to young persons in different educational and labour market regimes but also the obstacles which impede their life prospects.

It is apparent that public action consists not only in distributing individualised resources, but also in different strategies of addressing social and cultural factors of conversion for the individual. Thus, the volume highlights the local level of practical interaction between youth and institutions in terms of street-level bureaucracies, local employment agencies, educational agencies and devices. In a second step, it reconstructs the relationships between these local levels of practical interaction and the more comprehensive context of educational and labour market regimes and their ongoing transformations.

In the analyses of the contributions of this volume, the perspectives of young people themselves were systematically taken into account. They show that individuals have their own reasons to view pathways as a series of decisions that are not always and necessarily linear. It seems to be a major challenge to develop VET pathways that are more open to individual choice and changes of direction. Obviously some educational regimes are more able to accommodate this nonlinearity not only into official programmes but into real locally enacted strategies.

The following chapters will give detailed insights in the conception, theoretical foundation and empirical significance of the dimensions outlined. Of course this volume does not claim that the insights of its contributions are sufficient to present

a kind of master plan on how to tackle the situations and the capability gap of vulnerable young persons and public policy strategies dealing with the complex problems of local labour market demands.

However, it might become apparent that the suggested capability perspective of enabling young people to participate in working life and society has the potential of providing a fundament for more appropriate alternative strategies which are of high practical significance to educational and labour market policies in Europe. For the reasons mentioned above, we have structured the volume in the following way:

After this introduction, the analytical and theoretical chapters are presented.

The first of these chapters, “*The Capability Approach, Education and Labour Market*” (Chap. 2), is the main theoretical article and addresses the core idea and concepts within the capability approach and serves as an introduction to our conception of the approach for the readings of the other chapters in this volume. The concepts are presented in short and brought into their interdependent relations with a strong emphasis on the capability for education and work. Due to some differences between the conceptual understanding of capabilities between Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Robeyns 2005), this chapter furthermore provides a suggestion for an accessible model, which brings together the strengths from each conceptual perspective.

In the chapter “*Multilevel Governance and Capability Approach: What Convergence?*” (Chap. 3) the focus is turned to the issue of multilevel governance. Multilevel governance is a result of the growing political capacity of the European Union and subnational actors, which assesses the weakening of the traditional state-centred regulation model. The chapter argues that three major dynamics are promoted by the multilevel governance scheme: territorialisation, hybridization and individualization. These dynamics are also core components of the education-employment-training policy nexus dedicated to vulnerable youth. Hence, one question emerges: what kind of links can be made between the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen and this new political regulation scheme? In this chapter, the compatibility of the multilevel governance model with the capability approach is discussed in a theoretical mode and with references to vulnerable youth policies.

Policy programmes do not only work as programmes but have to be enacted by welfare professionals. This is discussed in the chapter “*New Conditions of Professional Work or Fall of Professions? On Managerialism and Professionalism*” (Chap. 4). This chapter presents and analyses the relationship between professionalism and managerialism. It focuses on the specific features of the changes of welfare policies, based on the insight that a number of shortcomings are also an outcome of the idea of economization of welfare and educational field. This chapter consists of three main sections and a short concluding discussion on this topic. The first deals with the changing societal conditions, pointing to the paradigmatic shift from welfare state to competitive state. Then a following section concentrates on the changing understanding of professionalism, which in turn is further followed up in section three by presenting changes in professional practice focusing on changed values of the public services, changed professional practices and impacts of competition. The fourth section is a short conclusive discussion.

The chapter “*Free Choice of Education? Capabilities, Possibility Spaces and Incapacitations of Education, Labour and Way of Living One’s Values*” (Chap. 5) changes focus from macro and conceptual levels and bring the focus on the individuals. It deals with the reconciliation of (pre)conditions and possibilities of access and choice of education and the contemporary educational dominating discourse in Danish education policies, i.e. the culture of testing and competition. Thus, the author uses among others the theoretical approach of the capability approach to sort out opportunities and processes of freedom in order to provide a theoretical framework and to describe with respect to the discourse of competition dominant influences, like, for example, the family background as well as international organisations, on possibilities of having actual free access to attain the education one reasons to value. The probability of having a free choice of education is not at least related to both individual and external conversion factors, whereas the latter are severely affected by education (almost exclusively) to labour disregarding the lack of preconditions and therefore worsening the situation of vulnerable youth. Pursuing the logic of the framework of the capability approach, the notion of external and individual capabilities are applied in order to point out individual, institutional and societal obstacles concerning the aim of accessing free choice of the educational trajectory one reasons to value.

Also dedicated to the question of institutionalised education is the chapter on “*European Universities and Educational and Occupational Intergenerational Social Mobility*” (Chap. 6). This chapter discusses EU-level developments in policy thinking in the area of higher education, training and labour markets. It assesses the drastically low chances for young Europeans from poorer and low-educated backgrounds to get higher education credentials and to work in highly skilled white-collar occupations. Special attention is given to the issue of access to higher education and how research may benefit from utilising theoretical insights from the capability approach.

Exactly this question, i.e. the connection between theory and empirical findings is the focus of the chapter “*Operationalisation of the Capability Approach*” (Chap. 7). While the capability approach offers a rich, comprehensive and innovative way to analyse well-being, its operationalisation is a demanding task, posing several conceptual, methodological and empirical challenges. This chapter provides an overview of the current state of the art of the application of the capability approach in economically developed countries to labour market and education research. The intrinsic complexity and multilayered structure of the capability approach seems to be particularly suitable for conceptualising and contextualising the integration of different aspects of the education-employment-community nexus. The education-to-work transition is used as an example, where a comparative perspective is taken to analyse employment and educational policies at the local, regional, national and European levels.

The chapter presents methodological and empirical strategies to highlight how the issues of suitably capturing and measuring young people’s capabilities can be addressed. In doing so, the chapter presents interesting perspectives and examples for those who wish to make use of the capability approach for future investigation.

Based on EU-SILC longitudinal data set from 2007 to 2008, the following chapter “*Labour Market Trajectories and Young Europeans’ Capabilities to Avoid Poverty, Social Exclusion and Independency: A Comparative Analysis of 23 European Countries*” (Chap. 8) shows how labour market trajectories are related to poverty, deprivation and also lack of independent living. The analysis reveals how the capabilities of young persons to lead a life they have reason to value are dependent on the country they are living in and on their labour market-related trajectories in each of these countries. Yet the results of the study also imply that even the fact of being in a stage of a more or less positive transition from education to employment may still go alongside with lacking basic capabilities.

Also based on EU-SILC longitudinal data, the chapter “*Would Active Labour Market Policies Enhance Youth Capability for Work in Europe?*” (Chap. 9) scrutinises whether the implementation of active labour market actually met the conditions in order that young entrants can take part in the labour market and whether they contribute to promoting respect for young persons’ capability to choose the work they have reason to value. Particular attention is given to the issue of employment quality. The contribution shows that a focus on internal capabilities alone might fail as individual and environmental factors interactively affect processes that may enhance or constrain their capability for work.

This perspective is deepened and differentiated in an assessment on “*Critical Aspects of the Transformation of Work and Welfare from a Capability Perspective*” (Chap. 10). This chapter shows the relevance of the capability approach for critical analysis of welfare states (and vice versa) because by starting off with the individual’s options to live the life one has reason to appreciate the former helps to understand why the contested character of social policies raises normative questions concerning the creation and implementation of measures and strategies that can support the freedom of the individual. The author argues that in particular the transition to a knowledge-based economy and the rise of activation policies have put the adaption of the abilities and competencies of individuals at the centre of political conflicts and debates. The capability approach provides an evaluative tool not only to understand this but also to propose adequate policies and intervention. Through an analysis of the results of the WORKABLE project, the paper highlights emerging ambiguities and modes of operation of dualised welfare systems, whereby transcending a narrow orientation towards the reinstalment of the capitalist work ethic as can be found in the debates about workfare. The paper shows that the WORKABLE research on educational and vocational policies and in-depth case studies on educational programmes concerning labour market transitions in 11 European countries offer a range of insights about the scope and content, as well as the relations and interactions between activities for peripheral groups and core routes of education – VET – employment.

In order to enhance our understanding of the ways to develop the capabilities for voice, work and education of young people who encounter difficulties in the transition from school to work, nine national, respectively, local *case studies* are presented and discussed in the next chapter “*Capabilities for Voice, Work and Education: Critical Analysis of Programmes for Disadvantaged Young People in Europe*” (Chap. 11). This chapter represents a micro-perspective on educational,

welfare and labour market policies and highlights the necessity to take the role of local actors into account. The case studies illustrate that processes of capability formation have to be understood as fertile in their relational dependencies, conditions and consequences as well as in relation to the contextual differences they operate within. The last article within the case study chapters, “*Capabilities for Education, Work and Voice: A Concluding Remark*”, compares central aspects of the case studies and brings them briefly together within an analytical and heuristic framework. The conditions for “a sustainable capability space” for young people in Europe are discussed.

The chapter “*Employability Versus Capability: European Strategies for Young People*” (Chap. 12) focuses in an empirical (albeit non-exhaustive) way on the issue of which elements of a capabilities perspective can already be found within the European Union’s education and employment strategies set up (mainly but not only) in the framework of Europe 2020 strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in order to address the growing rates of youth unemployment. The search for a definition of the target group of the analysis moves from “young people with fewer opportunities” to focus on young people Not in Education Employment or Training. The chapter describes the main strategies that the EU has put in place to match the education-related headline targets set by Europe 2020, paying particular attention to the EC strategy to reduce Early School Leaving, the measures put in place through the Youth Opportunity Initiative to tackle youth unemployment as well as the EU policy cooperation realised through the European Youth Strategy. The following section aims to identify CA-friendly elements within some of the above-mentioned policy measures developed and implemented by the EU, followed by recommendations for policymakers emphasising the need to reshape their approach towards youth (un)employment first and foremost by putting the empowerment of young people at the centre of the measures set up to facilitate the transition from school to work and adult life.

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Chapter 2

The Capability Approach, Education and the Labour Market

Christian Christrup Kjeldsen and Jean-Michel Bonvin

2.1 Introduction

Europe is currently experiencing its worst economic crisis since World War II. The present situation within European labour markets raises important questions regarding future opportunities for a great proportion of vulnerable young people. Even though a large number of young people in the age group 16–24 are enrolled in education (Eurostat 2012a), it is worth noticing that among young jobseekers, the “unemployment rate in the EU-27 was around twice as high as the rate for the total population throughout the last decade” (ibid.). This trend in the unemployment rate of the total labour force and of young people in particular calls for decisions and innovative solutions for the 24,667 million unemployed men and women within the EU 27 (Eurostat 2012b). The prescribed “medicine” has proved to be inadequate until now: “flexibility and a willingness to adapt have not been enough to ensure re-employment for many years. Neither does the repeated demand for mobility guarantee a job” (Schneider and Otto 2009: 8).

A closer scrutiny shows that the opportunity structures in terms of employment are unequally distributed within each country and that there are also large differences between countries. We can also observe a clear gap in the employment rate along age lines within the EU 27. The unemployment rate for young people under 25 is higher,

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